



Christie Administration Announces Up To \$55 million in School Improvement Grant Funds To Help Improve Nine Low Performing Schools

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Trenton, NJ – Acting Education Commissioner Christopher D. Cerf announced today the selection of nine low-performing schools that will be eligible for up to \$55 million in federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) dollars. These funds are in addition to more than \$850 million that Governor Christie added to district budgets across the state this year. These nine schools will each implement a federally-approved school improvement model. Final award amounts will be negotiated and announced in August.

“Intervening in our lowest performing schools is one of the most important things we can do to ensure that all students in New Jersey graduate from high school college- and career-ready,” said Acting Commissioner Cerf. “We must be willing to take drastic steps to help our most vulnerable students, and these new funds and changes at the school level will give these students a real chance to succeed.” SIG funds are supplied by the federal government and are available to the persistently lowest achieving schools in each state. Schools are identified either because of consistently low test scores or graduation rates below 60 percent. In total, 32 schools were eligible for SIG funds, and districts submitted applications for 28 of the schools. While final funding details will be announced next month, schools are eligible for up to \$2 million a year for three years.

In order to receive SIG funds, schools must implement one of four federally-approved models: Transformation, Turnaround, Restart, or Closure. The nine schools announced today will each implement the Turnaround or Transformation model.

The Transformation model requires that the district replace the school’s principal, unless that principal has been hired in the last two years as part of a reform effort. The Transformation model also requires schools to extend learning time for students, use student data to inform instruction, and implement strategies such as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions to recruit and retain high-quality staff. Four schools will implement the Transformation model.

The Turnaround model is similar to the Transformation model, except that it contains an additional requirement to replace no less than 50 percent of the staff. This year, five schools will implement the Turnaround model.

This is the second year that New Jersey schools have received SIG awards, but there are a number of differences with last year’s awards. First, the Department encouraged districts to apply for more intensive models of change, such as the Turnaround model. This year, the majority of SIG grantees will implement the more intensive Turnaround model.

In addition, the Department has pioneered a district-wide school improvement approach for districts receiving SIG funds. The award of these funds requires that districts develop a plan to enact reforms in all schools across the district, tied to the four key pillars of the Department, including:

- **Academics** – implementation of the Common Core State Standards by 2014
- **Performance** – development or purchase of robust formative assessments that provide timely data to teachers and administrators
- **Talent** – implementation of a performance evaluation system aligned to the state’s Teacher Evaluation Pilot, including at least 50 percent of evaluations using objective measures of student achievement (such measures need not consist exclusively of summative tests such as the NJ ASK or HSPA).
- **Innovation** – development of a dropout identification and intervention system.

“We encouraged districts to think boldly about the type of radical change needed to improve their lowest performing schools, and we are glad to see that they responded,” said Acting Commissioner Cerf. “However, the performance of an individual school is inherently connected to what is happening across the district, and we believe these district-wide changes will be vital to sustained improvement in these schools.” A full list of eligible schools and requirements of the model can be found at the link below:

<http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/education/grants/gropps2.pl?string=recnum=01561&maxhits=1>

Ten schools renewed for their second year

Last year, the Department of Education announced 12 schools to implement the Turnaround, Transformation, and Restart models, totaling \$45.3 million. Early results show dramatic improvement in the proficiency rates for first time HSPA test takers at a number of SIG high schools.

Two schools from last year’s grantees, Trenton High School and Renaissance Academy (Newark), were not renewed for the 2011-12 school year. These schools did not fully implement the required components of the SIG model.

“We are serious about making sure that SIG funds are used to create dramatic change and not simply maintain the status quo,” said Assistant Commissioner Barbara Gantwerk. “We will continue to monitor the implementation of all of these grants to ensure that they are bringing about real change for students across the state.”

2011-12 SIG schools:

District	School	Model
Camden City	Camden High School	Turnaround
East Orange	Cicely Tyson School of Performing and Fine Arts	Transformation
Jersey City	Lincoln High School	Turnaround
Lakewood Township	Lakewood High School	Transformation
Newark	Avon Avenue Elementary School	Turnaround
Newark	Barringer High School	Transformation
Newark	Hawthorne Avenue School	Turnaround
Paterson	Rev. Dr. Frank Napier, Jr. School (Number 4)	Transformation
Paterson	Number 10	Turnaround

2010-11 SIG schools that have been renewed for 2011-12:

District	School	Model
Camden City	US Wiggins Elementary School	Transformation
Camden City	Cramer Elementary School	Transformation

Essex County Vocational	W Caldwell Vocational	Transformation
Jersey City	Fred Martin No 41 Elementary School	Turnaround
Jersey City	Henry Snyder	Turnaround
Newark	Shabazz High School	Turnaround
Newark	Central High School	Transformation
Newark	West Kinney Alternative	Transformation
Newark	Dayton St Elementary School	Transformation
Roselle Borough	Abraham Clark High School	Transformation